

For A Night
Émile Zola



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FOR A NIGHT

THE MAID OF THE DAWBER

COMPLEMENTS

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FOR A NIGHT

The Maid of the Dawber Complements

After the French

OF
EMILE ZOLA

BY
ALISON M. LEDERER

PHILADELPHIA
BROWN BROTHERS
1911

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To My Wife

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The following pages from Zola, which the translator believes are now for the first time offered in English, were selected from two volumes published by Charpentier. The novel *Pour Une Nuit d'Amour* appeared in conjunction with *Le Capitaine Burle* and some other fiction in a volume which was in its ninth thousand in 1885. *La Vierge au Cirage* and *Les Repoussoirs*, together with two other bits which the author called *Les Vieilles aux Yeux Bleus* and *L'Amour Sous Les Toits*, which I have not thought quite distinctive enough to include in these selections, were entitled as a group *Esquisses Parisiennes*, and appeared in a volume to which the tale *Le Vœu d'Une Morte* gave its name, published by the same firm a little later —“Nouvelle édition 1889.”

So much for the bibliography. I cannot be more detailed for lack of inform-

ation. It is interesting to notice from a note presumably furnished by Zola himself that the source of the plot of the psychopathic novel *For A Night* is in Casanova. There is something distinctly of the moment in both the matter and the treatment: much more so in the former, for I am not quite certain that Mr Newte, Dr Sudermann or even Upton Sinclair would have caught and preserved the rarified calm and perfect simplicity of the atmosphere of “the little town of P—” (which I have called Pinard for the smoothness of the English) and the limpidity of the Chanteclair.

It would be merely trite to refer to the maid of the dawber and her master as studies of character. So much goes under that phrase in our days of the science of this and that. The dramatic manner in which the author carries the

intrinsic level of caste through this incident, or rather weaves the incident to indicate the level of caste, is one of the good things of literature and carries conviction.

And that delightful bit of fooling which he conceived in *Les Repoussoirs*, though scarcely as vital and essential as the former, surely has a charm of its own. The juxtaposition of the nonsense and the pity of it, just as in real life, do thrill.

A. M. L.

“*Inwall*,” *Milford, Penna.*, 1911.

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FOR A NIGHT

FOR A NIGHT

The little town of Pinard is built upon a hill. At the foot of the old ramparts flows a stream with high banks and very deep, the Chanteclair—so called from the clear ripple of its limpid waters. If you come by the road from Versailles you cross the Chanteclair near the south gate of the town by the stone bridge with a single arch, the low, rounded parapets of which serve all the old men of the countryside as benches. Straightaway rises the street called Beau-Soleil, at end of this lies a silent square called the square Quatre-Femmes. It is paved with large round stones, between which coarse grass sprouts and, from a distance, makes it greenish like a meadow.

The houses slumber. Every half hour the dragging footstep of some passerby rouses a dog to bark behind a stable door. The only life of this forgotten corner is the passing of the military officers twice a day, when they go to their mess at the inn on Beau-Soleil.

In a florist-gardener's house, on the left, there lived a young man. The gardener had rented him a large room on the second floor; and, since he himself occupied the other wing of the house, on Catherine Street, nearer his garden, Julien Michon lived undisturbed, with his own hall-door and stair-case, and was settled down at the age of twenty-five to the hobbies of a secluded old bachelor.

He had lost his father and mother very young. The Michons had been harness makers at Alluets, near Mantes. Upon their death, an uncle had sent the

boy to school. Then the uncle, too, died, and Julien was clerk at the post-office at Pinard for the last five years. His salary was fifteen hundred francs, without any chance of advancement. But he was economical and had no extravagant ideas.

Strapping, strong and raw-boned, Julien had large hands; and this troubled him. He knew he was ugly, his head square, as though left in the mold by a tipsy sculptor with a careless press of the thumb. And it made him very backward, especially in the presence of young women. Once, when a girl had told him laughingly that he was not so bad, he took her remark very seriously. When in the street he swung his arms, stooped dreadfully, hung his head and took long strides—to get away more quickly, under cover. His awkwardness made him continually irri-

table—an unhealthy incident of mediocrity and obscurity. He seemed to be perfectly resigned to live on thus, without a friendship, without a touch of romance, with only his monkish taste for seclusion.

And this life did not weigh on his broad shoulders. Julien, at bottom, was very happy. His soul was calm and transparent. His daily existence, with the rules which governed it, was the essence of tranquillity. In the morning he went to the office and settled down comfortably to the task left over from yesterday. Then he lunched sparingly, and took up his writing again. Then he dined, then went to bed and slept. Next day, sunrise only brought back yesterday. And this, week by week, month by month. The long perspective took on a rhythm, and rocked him into the sweet dreams which cattle have, drawing a

cart by day and sleeping at night on fresh straw. He absorbed the full charm of monotony. Sometimes he enjoyed going down Beau-Soleil after dinner and sitting on the bridge to hear the clock strike nine. He let his legs hang over the water, and watched the Chanteclair flow by under him with the wash of its silver ripples. The willows along both banks bent their pale heads, staring at their own reflections. Above, the thin grey of twilight was falling. And he remained spellbound in this great calm, thinking confusedly that the Chanteclair ought to be happy like himself to roll on forever over the same rocks, in the midst of such a beautiful silence. When the stars began to twinkle he went home to bed, his lungs full of the fresh air.

Moreover, Julien had other pleasures. On holidays he set out all alone

on foot, enjoying long rambles and returning thoroughly tired out. And he even made friends with a mute, an engraver, whose arm he held on long walks on the highway, without speech the whole afternoon. At other times, from the rear of the *Café des Voyageurs*, he and his mute would silently watch the interminable parties with ladies come and go. He had once had a dog, which was run over by a carriage, and he preserved the memory so religiously that he would have no other pet. At the post-office they teased him about a little girl of ten years, a barefoot tatterdemalion who sold matches, and to whom he gave pennies without taking any of her wares in return. This angered him, and after that he slipped the pennies into her hand unseen. No one ever saw him in company with a petticoat on the ramparts

in the evening. Even the working girls of Pinard, very forward wenches, had come to let him alone, when they saw that he was bashful in their presence and mistook their smiles of encouragement for mockery. About the town some called him stupid; others hinted that one would do well to beware of these young fellows who are so gentle and live alone.

Julien's paradise, the spot where he was really comfortable, was his own room. There only he felt sheltered from strangers. He would jump up and laugh aloud, and every time he looked into the mirror he was surprised to find himself very young. The room was large. He had put in a generous couch, a round table, two chairs and an arm-chair; and there was a plenty of space to walk, besides. The bed was almost lost at the back of an immense alcove.

A little washstand, between the two windows, seemed like a toy affair. He would walk to and fro or stretch out at full length on the couch; he wasn't in the least in his own way. He never wrote outside the office, and reading tired him. Since the old lady who kept the boarding-house where he took his meals insisted upon ministering to his education by loaning him novels, he read them. But after he had got all through he could not remember a single thing: these complicated stories were so lacking in common sense to him. He sketched a little—always the same head, a woman's profile, with a severe expression and with fillets and pearls in the knot of her hair. His only craving was for music. For whole evenings he played his flute; and this was his greatest recreation.

Julien had learned to play the flute

by himself. For a long while he had coveted an old flute of yellow wood in the window of a second-hand shop on the market square. He had the money, but he did not dare go in and buy it, for fear of being ridiculed. Finally, one evening he mustered up enough courage to carry it home. He ran all the way, hugging it close to his bosom, hidden under his coat. Then, behind closed doors and windows, for two years he had spelled out an old book of instruction which he picked up at a little shop — very low, so no one should hear. It was only for the last six months that he dared play with the windows open. He knew some very old airs, slow and simple, romances of the last century, which sounded infinitely tender as he worked them out with the awkwardness of a pupil full of feeling. On warm evenings, when the neighborhood was

asleep, and this delicate song was wafted out of the large room lighted by a candle, it might be taken for a lover's voice, low and tremulous, confiding to the solitude and to the night what it would never have said in the daytime.

Often, too, since he knew the airs by heart, Julien snuffed the candle for economy. And besides, he liked the dark. Seated at his window, looking out on the sky, he would play in the dim light. And the passersby raised their heads, looking to see whence this soft, pretty music came, like the distant call of a nightingale. The old flute of yellow wood was a little cracked, which gave it a muffled tone—the adorable voice of a marquise of other days still singing the minuets of her youth. One by one the notes fluttered away as with a little flutter of wings. It seemed that the song was born of the night itself,

and it mingled with the far-away sounds in the shadows.

Julien was very much afraid that some one of the neighbors would complain. But they sleep deep in the country. Besides, the square Quatre-Femmes was inhabited only by a notary, M. Savournin, and a retired gendarme on pension, Captain Pidoux, both very convenient neighbors, since they were in bed and asleep by nine o'clock. Julien feared still more the occupants of a noble mansion, the *hôtel* Marsanne, which rose on the other side of the square, just opposite his windows. It had a sombre grey façade, severe as a cloister. A stoop of five steps, overgrown with moss, rose to a massive door, studded with enormous nails. The second story was lined with ten windows, whose blinds opened and closed at once, at regular hours, with-

out giving a glimpse of the apartments behind the thin curtains, always drawn. To the left, the spreading chestnut trees of the garden formed a great mass of green, stretching their waves of leaves to the ramparts. And this imposing *hôtel*, with its park, its grave walls, its air of royal *ennui*, made Julien think that if the Marsannes did not like his flute they had only to say so in order to have it stopped.

The young man was overcome with a veneration as he sat at his window; the appointments of the garden and of the building seemed to him so vast. The *hôtel* was celebrated throughout the countryside, and they said that travelers came to visit it from afar. Stories were current, too, about the wealth of the Marsannes. Often he had watched the old pile to penetrate the mysteries of that mighty fortune. But

for all the hours he dreamed there he saw only the grey façade and the great shade of the chestnut trees. Never a soul ascended the deserted stoop; never did the moss-covered door open. The Marsannes had deserted this entrance, and used a gate on the street of Saint-Anne. Beyond, at the end of a lane, near the ramparts, was a little door to the garden, which Julien could not see. For him the *hôtel* remained dead, like one of those palaces in the fairy tales peopled with invisible beings. Morning and evening, he caught a glimpse of the servant's arm as she opened or closed the blinds; that was all. Then the house reassumed its air of deep melancholy, like an abandoned tomb in the old part of a cemetery. The chestnut trees were so dense that they hid the garden paths. And this hermetically sealed existence of the *hôtel*, haughty and silent,

kindled the imagination of the young man. So then, wealth was this gloomy peace, which aroused in him a religious tremor, like the vaulted arches of a church.

How often, before retiring, he had snuffed his candle and remained for an hour at his window, hoping to take by surprise the secrets of the *hôtel* Mar-sanne! At night, the building was a sombre silhouette against the sky, and the chestnut trees just a sea of ink. They must have been very careful about drawing the curtains inside, for not a ray of light escaped through the slats of the blinds. The *hôtel* did not even have that respiration of an occupied house, where one can feel the breathing of the sleepers. In the dark it was as though it had never been. Then it was that Julien became bold and took up his flute. He could play with impunity.

The empty *hôtel* sent back the echo of his little pearly notes. Certain long-drawn phrases lost themselves in the shadows of the garden, where not even the beating of wings was heard. The old flute of yellow wood seemed to sing its antiquated melodies before the castle of the Sleeping Beauty of the Woods.

One Sunday, in front of the church, a fellow employé of the post-office pointed out to Julien a distinguished old gentleman and an old lady. They were the Marquis and Marquise de Marsanne. They went about so seldom that he had never seen them before. He was deeply impressed : they seemed to him so thin and solemn, measuring their steps, saluted with low bows and acknowledging simply by a nod. Then his companion told him that they had a daughter still at the convent, Mademoiselle Thérèse de Marsanne, and that the little

Colombel, clerk of M. Savournin, the notary, was her foster-brother. And surely enough, as the two old people were turning into the street of Saint-Anne, little Colombel who was passing approached them, and the marquis extended his hand—an honor which he had shown no one else. This handshake pained Julien; for Colombel, a boy of twenty, with bright eyes and a mischievous mouth, had long been an enemy of his. He teased him about his timidity, and urged the girls of Beau-Soleil against him. It went so far that one day they had come to blows, on the ramparts, and the little notary's clerk had gone away with two black eyes. Julien played his flute lower than ever this evening since he had learned all these details.

However, all the solicitude which the *hôtel* Marsanne caused him did not alter

his habits, as regular as clock-work. He went to the office, luncheoned, dined and took his accustomed turn along the bank of the Chanteclair. The *hôtel* itself, with its great calm, entered into the quiet of his life, in the end. Two years elapsed. He had become so accustomed to the grassy stoop, to the grey façade and to the black shutters, that they all seemed to him matter-of-course, quite necessary to the sleep of the neighborhood.

Five years Julien had been living in the square Quatre-Femmes, when one July evening, a certain event caused a great stir in his existence. The night was hot and starlit. He was playing his flute in the dark, drawing out the rhythm and lingering on certain notes, when, of a sudden, a window of the *hôtel* Marsanne just opposite was thrown open, and remained wide, bril-

liantly lighted in contrast with the sombre façade. A young girl had come to get a breath of air, and she lingered there, her delicate outline sharp cut as she raised her head to listen. Julien trembled. He had stopped playing. He could not make out the features of the girl; he saw only the flow of her tresses let down for bed. And a gentle voice reached him from out the silence:

“Didn’t you hear, Françoise? I could be certain it was music.”

“A nightingale, mademoiselle,” replied a coarse voice from within. “Close the shutters. ‘Ware the flying things of night.”

When the façade had become dark again, Julien could not rise from his armchair. His eyes still bore the picture of that bright spot which had appeared in the façade, heretofore blank. And he still trembled. He asked him-

self whether he ought to be glad of the apparition. Then, an hour later, he began to play again, very softly. He smiled at the idea that the girl thought there was a nigthingale in the chestnut trees.

II.

Next day, at the post-office, the ~~great~~ piece of news was that Mademoiselle Thérèse de Marsanne had just returned from the convent. Julien did not mention that he had seen her with her hair down and neck bare. He was uneasy; he had an unaccountable aversion to this young girl, who was sure to interfere with the regularity of his habits now. Anyway, that window whose blinds he dreaded to see flung open at any moment troubled him. He could no longer be comfortable, even in his own room; a man would not have been so bad, for women are more given to mocking. How could he dare to play his flute now? Surely he played too poorly to suit a young lady who must know something about music. So, by

evening, after turning it all over in his mind, he came to the conclusion that he hated Thérèse.

Julien entered his room furtively. He did not light the candle. So she could not see him, at any rate. He decided to go right to bed because he was in a bad humor. But he could not resist an impulse to find out what was going on across the way. The window did not open. Only, towards ten o'clock, a faint light showed through the shutters. After a while it went out, and he found himself looking at the dark window. Every evening, in spite of himself, he began to spy. He watched the *hôtel* closely, and, as at the beginning, he tried to note any little sounds which might betoken that the old stones had come to life again. Nothing seemed changed. The ancient pile slept, as formerly, a deep undisturbed slumber. It

would require acute observation to detect any new life—as, for instance, on rare occasions, a light passing by the windows, the corner of a curtain disarranged or a large chamber exposed to view. Again, at times, a soft step crossed the garden; the distant tones of a piano, accompanying a voice, floated over; or sounds still more vague were heard—just a quiver, which told that young blood was pulsing within the old house. Julien accounted to himself for his curiosity by pretending that all these goings on annoyed him. How he looked back with regret on the old days when the empty *hôtel* threw back to him the sweet echo of his flute!

But one of his most ardent wishes, though he would not admit it for a moment, was to see Thérèse again. He pictured her with pink cheeks, a mocking expression and brilliant eyes. But

since he did not risk going near his windows in the daytime, he saw nothing but the night and its gloomy shadows. One morning, as he was throwing open his shutters to let in the sun, he caught a glimpse of her standing in the middle of her room. He remained rooted to the spot, not daring to move. She seemed to be in meditation, very tall, very pale, with handsome regular features. He was almost afraid of her—she was so different from the sprightly picture he had imagined. Her mouth was a little large and very red; her eyes were deep black and without lustre, which gave her the appearance of a cruel queen. Slowly she came to the window. But she did not see him—as though he were too far off. Then she walked away again, and her rhythmic carriage was so graceful that he felt weaker than a child in her presence, despite his broad shoulders.

And now, the young man's very existence became miserable. This beautiful young lady, grave and dignified, who lived so near him, was his despair. She never looked at him; she ignored his being. But it made matters no better when he imagined she noticed him and found him ridiculous. His unhealthy bashfulness led him to believe that she was actually spying on his every move, to make fun of him. He slipped into his house like a thief and avoided moving about his room. Finally, by the end of a month, he was really suffering from the disdain of this girl. Why did she never notice him? She would come to the window, sweep her black eyes along the deserted street and withdraw without seeming to be aware of him, as he stood quivering across the way. And just as he had formerly trembled at the idea of being seen

by her, he now yearned with all his heart that she should turn her eyes upon him. She had come to occupy every hour of his life.

When Thérèse arose in the morning he forgot the office, he who had been so punctual. He was afraid of that white face with the red lips; but the fear was delicious: he enjoyed it. Hidden behind his curtain, he thrilled with the terror which she inspired, until he felt ill and his legs went weak, as though he had walked over far. Sometimes he pretended that she had noticed him, all of a sudden, and that she smiled, and that his fear was all gone.

And then the idea struck him to win her with his flute. All through the warm evenings he played patiently. He left both windows open and played in the dark—his oldest melodies, pastorals, simple as a child's ditties. He

held the notes, and they trembled and followed one another in plaintive cadences, like love-sick ladies of the olden time holding out their skirts for a curtsey. He chose the nights when there was no moon. The square was dark; no one could possibly know where this sweet song came from, brushing by the sleeping houses like the soft wing of a bird of the night. And on the very first evening, he was enraptured to see Thérèse, robed for bed, all in white, come to the window and rest her elbows on the sill, surprised to hear once more that music which had greeted her on the night of her arrival.

“Listen, Françoise,” she said in her low voice, turning back into the room. “It isn’t a bird.”

“Oh, it must be some minstrel playing on the road, far away,” answered

the old woman, whom Julien could just make out by her shadow.

“Yes. Very far away,” repeated the girl, after a pause, baring her arms to the freshness of the night.

Thereafter, every evening Julien played a little louder. His lips burned with the music, and their warmth passed into the old flute of yellow wood. And each night Thérèse wondered at this passionate music, which seemed to be waiting to take a step nearer. She was quite certain that the player was coming closer to her window; sometimes she stood on tiptoes to look over the house-tops. Finally, one night, the song seemed so very near that she was quite bewildered. She guessed it came from one of the sleeping houses on the square. Julien breathed out all his passion, and the old flute responded with tones of crystal. The darkness made him so bold

that he hoped to bring her over to himself by the sheer strength of his music. And, surely enough, Thérèse leaned far out, as though charmed and conquered.

“Come in,” said the voice of the old woman. “A storm is brewing, and you won’t sleep well.”

That night Julien could not sleep at all. He imagined that Thérèse had found him out. Perhaps she had actually seen him! And as he tossed in his bed he wondered whether he ought not to show himself in the morning. Surely it would be ridiculous to hide from her any longer. However, he decided not to be seen.

But he happened to be at his window at six o’clock, putting his flute back in the case, when Thérèse’s shutters were hastily pushed open. The girl, who never arose before eight o’clock, appeared at the window in a dressing-

sacque and leaned on the sill, her hair down about her shoulders. Julien was struck dumb, looking her right in the face and unable to turn away; and all the while his awkward hands were striving vainly to carry the flute to his lips. Thérèse, too, studied him, with a steady and superior air. In a moment she seemed to take in his coarse frame and unwieldy body, with all its awkwardness and ugliness of a bashful giant. And she was no longer the emotional girl of the evening before. She was haughty and very white, with her black eyes and her red lips. When she had passed upon him, as nonchalantly as she would have decided whether a dog in the street pleased her or not, she condemned him with an almost imperceptible movement: Then, turning her back leisurely, closed the window.

Julien's legs gave way and he

dropped into his armchair. Broken sentences fell from him. "Ah, heaven! She does not like me! I who love her—I—I—It will kill me!" He rocked his head between his hands and sobbed. Why, why had he let her see him! When a man is ungainly he should hide himself, and not frighten women! He abused himself, furious at his ugliness. And now it was really true that he could no longer go on playing his flute in the dark, like a bird of the night, which ravishes the heart by its song, but which must never be seen by daylight if it would please? He would gladly have remained to her a sweet song, nothing but an old-time melody of a mysterious love. He would gladly have worshipped her without ever meeting her, like a Prince Charming come from afar and dying of the tender passion under her window. But he had broken the spell

in his coarseness and folly. Now she knew him to be as clumsy as an ox, she would never listen to his music again!

And so it was. He might play his tenderest airs, he might choose the warmest evenings, balmy with the odor of the foliage, Thérèse would not listen —did not hear him. She went to and fro in her room and sat at her window, just as though there were nobody across the way trying to sing his love in plaintive little notes. One day, she even cried: “Mercy! How annoying that flute is, with its false notes!” And thereupon he threw it into the bottom of a drawer and never played again.

It should also be said that little Colombel made fun of him. Once, on his way to the notary’s, he had looked up at the window and had seen Julien practising a new tune, and every time he passed thereafter he laughed malic-

iously. Julien knew that the notary's clerk was received by the Marsannes, and this riled him—not because he was merely jealous of this little abortion, but that he would have given every drop of his blood to be in his place for an hour. Colombel's mother, Françoise, had been in the service of the house for many years, and attended Mademoiselle Thérèse now. And besides, the young noblewoman and the little peasant-fellow had grown up together, and it was but natural that they should continue something of their old comradeship. Julien suffered all the more when he met Colombel in the streets, his lips screwed up in a thin smile. And his repulsion became still greater when he realised that the abortion had a pretty face, a round head like a cat's, but very delicate, engaging and diabolical; his eyes were green and he wore a thin,

sandy beard on his pointed chin. Oh, if he could only catch him now at a corner of the ramparts, how he would make him pay for the pleasure of meeting Thérèse at home!

A year slipped by. Julien was very unhappy. He lived only for Thérèse. His heart went out to that icy *hôtel* across the way, which had aroused his awkward love. Every moment he had to spare he came to spend here, his eyes fixed on the side of that grey wall. He knew every clod of moss by heart. Little good it did him, these long months, to keep his eyes open and his ears intent; he learned nothing whatever of the inside of that solemn mansion, where his heart was imprisoned. Vague sounds, flitting lights drew him to his feet. Did they mean feasts or mourning? He could not tell. All its active life was confined to the other

wing. He could dream whatever he pleased, according to his moods. He imagined her entertaining Colombel, or walking slowly under the shade of the chestnut trees, or whirled in the arms of dancers, or sitting alone in quiet halls to weep over some girlish disappointment. Perhaps it was only the mincing step of the marquis or the marquise trotting across the old floors that he imagined he heard. But, in spite of his utter ignorance, there was always her window in the wall across the way, before his eyes. Every day he saw Thérèse, mute as a stone, without the slightest sign to raise hope in his bosom. She awed him: she remained so completely unknown, so far away from him.

Julien's great occasions were when the window remained open. Then he could get a glimpse of the corners of her room, while the girl was away. It

took six months for him to learn that the bed was on the left, in an alcove, with pink silk curtains. At the end of another six months he knew that across from the bed was a Louis XV. bureau, topped with a mirror in a porcelain frame. Straight across he could see the white marble fireplace. This room was his dream of paradise.

His love was not without struggles. For weeks he would keep himself hidden, ashamed of his ugliness. Then anger would seize him. He felt he must show his great body; he must thrust into prominence his ugly face, seared with the marks of an old fever. At such times he would keep coming to the window for weeks, and weary her with his presence. Twice, he even threw her burning kisses, with the brutality of bashful people when sudden boldness carries them away.

Thérèse did not even seem to be annoyed. From his concealment he saw her come and go, with her regal air, haughtier and colder than ever. He was never able to catch her off her guard. If she happened to meet his glance, she did not even hasten to turn away. He simply did not exist for her. When he heard it said at the post-office that Mademoiselle de Marsanne was very pious and very good, sometimes he protested violently to himself. No! No! She was without religion! She loved blood; that was why her lips were so red! And the pallor of her complexion came from mistrusting everybody! Then he would weep because he had insulted her, and beg grace, as though she were a saint wrapped in the purity of her wings.

During that first year, day followed day without bringing any change.

When summer came again he experienced a strange sensation. Thérèse seemed to live in another world. The little incidents were always the same—the shutters flung open in the morning and drawn in at evening, and her usual appearances at the accustomed hours. But a different breath seemed to be exhaled by that room. Thérèse was paler than ever, taller than ever. One day he dared for the third time to throw her a kiss with the tips of his fingers. She looked straight at him fixedly, with that discomforting gravity of hers, and did not withdraw from the window. He was the one to shrink, his face purple with a blush.

One thing, toward the end of the summer, moved him deeply, although it might be commonplace enough. About twilight, almost every day, Thérèse's window which had been left partly open

was slammed to, so the sash and latch rattled. This noise made Julien tremble with a sort of horror; and he was tortured with anguish, without being able to tell why. After this rough shock the house would become so quiet that he was afraid of the silence. For a long while he could not make out the arm which closed the window so, but one evening he recognized the pale hands of Thérèse. It was she who turned the latch so furiously. And when she would open the window again, an hour later, she did so without haste, with dignity; she seemed tired and rested for a moment. And then she would walk back to the centre of her pure chamber, busied with the little tasks of a young girl. Julien was at a loss; the violent creaking of the window latch kept running through his head.

One evening in particular, in the au-

tumn, when the weather was soft and gentle, the latch received a frightful twist. Julien shook and tears started to his eyes, as he stood before the *hôtel*, which the shadows were fast swallowing up. It had been raining in the morning, and the chestnut trees, half dry, exhaled an odor of death. Julien was waiting for the window to open again. Suddenly it was flung open as violently as it had been closed. Thérèse appeared. She was perfectly white, her eyes looked very wide, and her hair tumbled about her neck. She came and stood right in front of the window. Then she deliberately pressed her ten fingers to her red lips and threw a kiss to Julien.

Aghast, he struck his breast with his fists, as though to ask if that kiss could have been meant for him. Thérèse thought he was drawing back. She leaned further out, and pressing her ten

fingers to her red lips again, threw him another kiss. And then a third. It was as though she were responding to the three kisses he had sent her. He remained breathless. The twilight was clear, and he could see her distinctly outlined against the black of the open window. She glanced up and down the little square. Then in a smothered voice she said one word: "Come."

He hurried down and crossed to the *hôtel*. As he raised his head the door opened slightly—that moss-grown door which had been bolted for half-a-century perhaps. But he was walking in a trance; he was no longer astonished at anything. As soon as he was inside the door was closed, and he followed a little hand, ice-cold, which led the way. He mounted a flight of steps, crossed a corridor, passed through a first chamber, and then found himself in one he knew

well. It was his dream-paradise, the room with the pink silk curtains. Daylight was dying here with a sweet lingering. He was tempted to drop on his knees. But Thérèse stood before him very straight, her hands tightly clasped—so resolute that she conquered a shudder which was coming over her.

“You love me?” she asked in a low voice.

“Oh, yes!—Yes!—Yes!” he stammered.

But with a gesture she bade him waste no words. She spoke again, with a dignity which seemed to make what she said natural and chaste, even on the lips of a young girl.

“If I give myself to you, you will do whatever I ask; won’t you?”

He could not speak, he clasped his hands. For one kiss he would sell his soul.

“Very well. I have something to ask of you.”

Since he remained speechless, she seemed to be struck by a new thought, realizing that she had exhausted her resources and that she could dare no more, she cried:

“See!—You must swear first.—I swear to keep my bargain.—Swear! Swear!”

“Oh, I swear! Oh, anything you wish!” he replied, completely carried away.

The fragrance of the chamber intoxicated him. The curtains of the alcove were drawn, and the bare thought of the virgin bed in the subdued shadow of pink silk filled him with an ecstasy. And then with her hands, now strangely brutal, she tore aside the curtains and revealed the alcove, where the twilight left a doubtful glow. The bed was in

disorder; the covering trailed over the edge and a pillow had fallen to the floor. In the midst of the rumpled laces lay the dead body of a man, barefoot, across the bed.

“There!” she explained in a stifled voice. “That man was my lover.—I pushed him.—He fell.—I don’t know any more.—But he is dead. And you must get rid of him. You understand; don’t you? That’s all. Yes. That’s all.”

III.

When she was still a very little girl, Thérèse de Marsanne made Colombel her fag. He was barely six months older than she, and Françoise, his mother, had managed to bring him up on the bottle, so as to nurse the girl. Later, having grown up in the house, he occupied a nondescript position—something between a servant and a playfellow for the young girl.

Thérèse was a vixen. Not that she was a tomboy or boisterous; on the contrary, she maintained a singular gravity, which led visitors, to whom she was very courteous, to regard her as an exceedingly well-mannered child. But she had strange ways. When she was alone she would suddenly break forth with inarticulate cries and foolish grim-

aces, or else she would lie down on her back in the middle of a path in the garden and refuse to get up, in spite of all persuasion or correction. They could never tell what she was thinking of. Even in her large baby eyes there was not the slightest sparkle; and, instead of those clear mirrors where you can read so accurately the whole soul of a child, her eyes were sombre bottomless pits, as black as ink, which it was impossible to fathom.

At the age of six she commenced to torture Colombel. He was puny and under-sized. She would take him to the far end of the garden, under the chestnut trees, to a spot concealed by foliage, and leaping upon his back make him carry her. It was an hour's trip for them around a large circle. She choked him and spurred him with her heels, without even giving him a breathing

spell. He was the horse; she was the lady. And when he was overcome and seemed about to sink, she would bite his ear until it bled, and cling to him so furiously that her little nails sank into his flesh. Then he would spurt off at a gallop again, and the cruel little queen of six years flew in and out among the trees, her hair streaming in the wind, carried by the little boy who was her horse.

Later she used to pinch him, even in the presence of her parents; but she forbade him to cry, under the continual threat of having him put out of the house if he mentioned their amusements. And so they had a sort of secret, a manner when they were alone together, which was completely changed in company. When they were alone she treated him like a toy, with a desire to break him and see what was inside.

Was she not a marquise, and was she not used to seeing people at her feet? And since they gave her a little boy to play with, surely she could use him as she pleased. When she got tired of queening it over Colombel, when no one was looking, she took the livelier pleasure of kicking him or sticking a pin in his arm; but she so magnetized him with her sombre eyes that he did not even quiver.

Colombel stood this martyr's life with mute revolts which left him trembling, eyes rooted upon the ground to overcome the temptation of strangling his young mistress. But he, too, was of a surly temperament. It did not displease him to be beaten. He found it a sort of pleasure and even courted it, awaiting her onslaught with a wild shudder, strangely satisfied when he felt the sting of the pin. And besides, he revelled in

hatred. Sometimes he took his revenge straightway, and dropped on the pavement carrying Thérèse with him, fearless of breaking a limb, delighted when she received a bruise. If he did not cry when she pricked him in company, it was so nobody should come between them. It was an affair which concerned the two of them only, a quarrel in which he was sure that he should prove the victor later on.

However, the marquis was becoming uneasy about the violent behavior of his daughter. They said she resembled one of her uncles, who had led a terrible life of adventure and who met his death by assassination in a bad spot, at the end of a *faubourg*. The Marsannes had quite a tragic strand in their family history. Certain of its members, from time to time, were born with a strange failing, out of the regular line with its

haughty dignity; and this failing was like a strain of madness, a perversion of the sentiments, a bad froth which seemed for the time to mar the family blood. And so, the marquis thought it the part of prudence to subject Thérèse to a strenuous education, and he placed her in a convent, where he hoped that the rigorous rule would bend her nature. There she had remained until she was eighteen.

When Thérèse returned she was very staid and tall. Her parents were delighted to find her profoundly pious. In church she was absorbed, her face between her hands. At home she diffused the charm of innocence and peace. They had only one fault to find; she was a gourmand, and ate candies from morning to night. She had a way of sucking them, her eyes half closed, with a little thrill of her red lips. No one

would have recognized the surly child who used to come back from the garden in tatters and would never tell at what game she had torn her frock. Now the marquis and marquise, shut up for fifteen years in their vast empty *hôtel*, thought it their duty to entertain once more. They gave several dinners to the nobility of the province. They even gave a dance. Their purpose, of course, was to marry Thérèse. And, in spite of her coldness, she appeared quite obliging. She dressed and waltzed; but her face was so white that she made the young men who presumed to court her very uneasy.

Thérèse never mentioned little Colombel. The marquis had taken an interest in him and placed him with M. Savournin, with special instructions. One day Françoise brought the young people together, reminding Thérèse of

her former playmate. Colombel was smiling, very dapper and not in the least embarrassed. Thérèse looked at him coldly, said she remembered him, and then turned her back. But eight days later Colombel came again, and soon he fell into his old ways. He visited the *hôtel* every evening after his studies for the day were ended and brought Thérèse new music and books and albums. He was treated inconsequentially and sent errands like a servant or a poor relative. He became a dependence of the household. And so quite naturally he was often alone with the young girl. As before, they shut themselves up in large apartments for fun, and remained for hours in the shady spots of the garden. Of course, they didn't play at the old games. Thérèse walked slowly, trailing her skirt over the grass. Colombel, dressed like the

best young men in town, walked with her, tapping the ground with the little flexible cane he always carried.

Nevertheless, she was the queen and he the slave as much as ever. To be sure, she did not bite him any longer; but she had a way of walking close to him which belittled him and turned him into a page holding the train of his royal mistress. She tortured him by her fantastic humors, now showing utter abandon in the extraordinary things she said, and again stiffening into coldness—just to amuse herself. When her back was turned he shot piercing glances at her, sharp as a dagger, and revealed his true nature of a vicious boy meditating treachery.

One summer evening, when they had been walking for a long while in the heavy shadows of the chestnut trees,

Thérèse turned to him, after a silence, and said, with all gravity:

“I am tired, Colombel. Suppose you were to carry me as you used to do.— You remember?”

He smiled a little, then replied quite seriously:

“I am willing, Thérèse.”

But she walked on, simply remarking:

“Very well. I only wanted to know.”

They continued their stroll. The shades of evening were falling deep under the trees. They were talking of a lady of the town who had just married a military man. As they were about to enter a path narrower than the rest, the young man stepped aside to allow her to precede. But she struck him violently and made him walk before her. Now neither spoke. Then suddenly

Thérèse leapt upon his shoulders with all her old-time agility of a wild cat.

“Now off!” she cried, in a changed voice, choked with fury. She had snatched away his cane and was brandishing it about his legs. Clinging tight to his shoulders, almost choking him between her mature thighs, she drove him madly into the dark shadows of the thicket. And she kept whipping him to make him go faster. Colombel galloped furiously over the grass. He did not say a word; he only panted and stiffened his legs under the warm burden of this big girl which was bearing heavy on his neck.

But when she cried “Whoa!” he did not stop. He galloped still faster. His hands, clasped behind her, held her so tight that she could not leap down. The horse was running away with his mistress. Suddenly, in spite of her lash-

ing with the cane and her scratching, he swerved toward a pagoda, where the gardener kept his tools. There he threw her on the straw and had his way with her. At last his turn to rule had come.

Afterwards Thérèse was a little paler than usual, her lips were redder and her eyes blacker. She continued her life of religious devotion. A few days later the whole scene was re-enacted. She leapt on Colombel's shoulders, wishing to crush him, and ended by being thrown on the straw of the pagoda again. In public, she was very gracious to him and treated him with the superiority of an elder sister. He was smilingly polite. They remained, as they had been at six years of age, two vicious beasts turned loose, amusing themselves by biting each other in secret. Only now the male was the victor.

Their love was terrible. Later Thérèse received him in her chamber. She had given him a key to the little gate in the garden which opened on the path from the ramparts. At night he had to pass through an outer room, in which his own mother slept. But the lovers showed such audacious presence of mind that no one suspected them for an instant. They dared even to have tryst in the daytime. Colombel came before dinner, and Thérèse only closed the window. The desire to be together was always upon them—not to whisper the tender love-words of lovers of twenty, but to take up the hot combat of their pride and sex. Oftentimes a quarrel sprang up, and they abused one another in low tones. More often they were fairly trembling with rage that they could not cry out and fight.

And so, one evening, before dinner,

Colombel had come as usual. While he was walking up and down the room, he had a sudden whim to seize Thérèse and have his way by main force, then and there. Thérèse struggled to free herself, crying:

“Let go! You know I’m stronger than you. I’ll hurt you!”

Colombel only laughed. “Very well, hurt me,” he murmured.

He kept swinging her about to throw her. Then she grappled with him. They had often played at this game, to satisfy their craving for fight. Oftenest it was Colombel who fell first, breathless, his limbs lax and worn out. He was so little she would gather him up and crush him against her body.

But this time Thérèse slipped to her knees, and Colombel with a sudden push threw her back. He was on top in triumph.

“You see now, you are not the stronger,” he exclaimed, with a tantalizing smile.

She had become livid. She got up slowly and grappled with him again, without a word. She shook so with anger that he shuddered. Oh, to crush him! To have done with him! To see him there lifeless—beaten forever! For a moment they struggled in silence, their breath came hot and fast, their limbs cracked under the strain. It was no longer play. The cold thought of homicide was on their heads. His throat began to rattle. And, fearful lest they should be overheard, she gave him one last push with all her strength.

Thérèse was getting her breath. She gathered up her hair before the mirror. She pulled a strip of embroidery from her skirt, which had been torn, pretending not to heed the vanquished.

He could manage to pick himself up. Then she prodded him with her toe. Finally, since he did not move, she bent over him, with a little shiver in the back of her neck. Colombel's face was as pale as wax, his eyes glassy, his mouth distorted. There was a hole in his right temple; his head had struck the edge of the bureau. Colombel was dead.

She arose, cold as ice. She spoke aloud to herself in the silence:

“Dead! He's dead now!”

And suddenly the reality filled her with frightful anguish. True enough, a moment before she had wanted to kill him. But that was only part of her nature, a cloud of passion. One always wants to kill when one is fighting. But one does not always kill, because the dead are disquieting. No! No! She was not guilty! She had not wished to do this. In her own room—the idea!

She continued to speak aloud in little broken sentences.

“Well, it’s done! He’s dead, and he can’t get out of here by himself.”

A fever followed the cold stupor of the first moment and welled up like a wave of fire. There was a dead man in her room. She could never explain his presence there, barefoot and in shirt-sleeves, with a gash in his temple. She was lost.

Thérèse stooped and looked at the wound. But a sudden fear seized her, leaning over the corpse. She heard Françoise, Colombel’s mother, passing along the corridor, then other noises, footsteps, voices—the preparations for a dance which was being given that very evening. They might call her or come to look for her at any moment. And this dead man was with her—this lover

whom she had killed and whose weight was now on her guilty shoulders!

Deafened by the noises in her head, which were becoming louder and louder, she rose and began to turn around the room. She was looking for a hole into which to thrust this dead man, who threatened to ruin her future. She peered under the furniture, into corners, shaking all the time at her helplessness. No. There was not a spot; the alcove was not deep enough, the closets too narrow,—the room utterly refused to help her. And yet it was here they had found a place to hide their embraces! He used to come in with the soft noise of a malicious cat, and he used to go out in the same manner. She never thought he could become so heavy.

Thérèse kept fretting, moving about the room with the restless fury of a beast at bay. Then she thought she had

an inspiration. What if she were just to throw Colombel out of the window? No. When they found him they would easily guess where he had fallen from. But meanwhile she had lifted the curtain to look out into the street, and of a sudden her eyes rested upon the young man across the way—the imbecile who played a flute at his window, as subdued as a dog! She knew his sallow face so well, always turned towards her; she had become so tired of all its cowardly devotion. At the sight of Julien, so humble and so faithful, she stopped abruptly. A smile lit up her colorless face. Here was help—her salvation! The imbecile loved her like a dog; he would obey her, even to the commission of a crime. And besides, she would repay him with all her soul—with her body. She had despised him because he was so soft; but she would love him

now; she would buy him at any price, if he would dabble his hands in this blood for her. Her red lips throbbed at the thought of a new love which the stranger might inspire.

Then deftly, as she would have managed with a bundle of linen, she lifted Colombel's body, carried it to her bed. And, opening the window, threw those three kisses to Julien.

IV.

Julien was in a trance. When he recognized Colombel on the bed he was not surprised: he found it all quite clear and natural. Yes. Only Colombel could be in the recess of that alcove, his temple gashed, his limbs stiffened in a horrible posture.

Thérèse spoke to him for some time; he did not hear,—her words blurred into a confused stupor. Then he realized that she was giving him instructions, and he listened. He must not leave the room now; he must wait until midnight, when the house would be dark. This dance which the marquis was giving would prevent them from acting before that time; but, on the other hand, it would be of some advantage, since everybody would be too busy to think

of coming up to her room, meanwhile. At the appointed hour Julien would take the body on his back, carry it down and drop it into the Chanteclair, at the foot of Beau-Soleil. The tranquillity with which Thérèse unfolded this plan was marvellous.

She stopped and, placing her hands on the young man's shoulders, asked him:

“You understand me thoroughly? Are we agreed?”

He trembled. “Oh, yes, yes! Anything you ask! I am yours!”

Then she leaned towards him. He did not seem to understand. So she said:

“Kiss me.”

Quivering, he imprinted a long kiss on her cold forehead. And both of them kept their silence.

Thérèse had drawn the curtains of the bed again. She dropped into an

armchair and rested, deep in the shadow. After a moment Julien noticed that he was still standing and took a chair. Françoise had left the next room, and only confused, distant sounds came up at intervals. The chamber seemed to fall asleep, filling little by little with shadows.

For nearly an hour nothing moved. Great throbs kept beating in his head and prevented him from thinking. He was in Thérèse's room, and that filled him with satisfaction. Then suddenly, when he recollected that there was a corpse at the back of that alcove, the curtains brushing against his hand made him shiver. He felt weak. She had loved that abortion—merciful heaven, was it possible! He forgave her for having killed it. He could not accuse her of any wrong. But what kindled his blood was the thought of

Colombel's bare feet in the laces of her bed! What a pleasure it would be to drop him into the Chanteclair, from the end of the bridge, in a deep, dark spot of the stream he knew well! Then they would both be free—for each other! And at this thought of happiness, which he had not dared to dream that morning, he seemed to see himself on the bed, in the very spot where the corpse now lay; but the spot was very cold, and he was overcome with a frightful repugnance.

Thérèse sat doubled up in her arm-chair. She did not stir. Outlined against the light of the window he saw only the soft knot of her hair. She remained with her face buried in her hands, so it was impossible to guess the thoughts which absorbed her. Was it only the reaction after the frightful ordeal she had been through? Or was it

crushing remorse—a regret for that lover wrapped in his last sleep? Was she quietly perfecting their plans of safety or was she hiding the signs of an awful fear on her face plunged in shadow? He could not imagine.

The clock struck in the silence. Thérèse rose slowly and lighted the candles on her bureau, and she was once more thoroughly possessed of her usual calm—beautiful, easy, strong. She seemed to have forgotten the dead man behind the pink silk curtains. She came and went with the even step of one busied in the privacy of her room. Then while she undid her hair she said to Julien without even turning:

“I must dress for this dance. If anyone comes you will hide in the alcove.”

He sat there watching her. She treated him like a lover already, as though the bloody complicity which she

had raised between them united them in a tie of intimacy.

Her long arms raised high, she was doing her hair. He could not take his eyes from her. He quivered at the sight of her bare neck and the languid movements of her pointed elbows and slender hands as they rolled up her tresses. Was she trying to bewitch him by dangling before his eyes the prize he was about to earn, so as to make him strong?

She was changing her shoes when they heard a noise.

“Quick! Hide in the alcove!” she said in a whisper.

And with a prompt move she threw over the rigid body of Colombel the lingerie she had just taken off—still warm from her skin. Françoise came in and announced:

“They are waiting for you, Mademoiselle.”

“I’m coming,” answered Thérèse quietly. “Wait—you can help me with my dress.”

Through an opening in the curtains Julien could see the two women. He trembled at the girl’s boldness and his teeth chattered so lively that he held his hand over his mouth to stifle the sound. Right next to him, under a waist of Thérèse’s, he saw Colombel’s foot hanging over the edge of the bed. What if Françoise, his own mother, should happen to pull aside that curtain and stumble over her son’s foot—that bare foot that stuck out!

“Carefully,” Thérèse was saying, “Go gently—you’ll crush the flowers.”

There wasn’t the least trace of emotion in her voice. She was smiling now, like a girl preparing for the ball. The dress was white silk trimmed with eg-lantine—white flowers with a spot of

red at the heart. And as she stood in the centre of the room she was like a great bouquet of virgin whiteness. Her bare arms and neck were as white as the silk itself.

“Oh, how pretty you look! How pretty you look!” repeated the satisfied old woman. “But your wreath! Wait—”

She seemed to be searching for it, and her hand came near the curtain as though to look on the bed. Julien almost allowed a cry of anguish to escape him. But Thérèse said leisurely, smiling all the while in her mirror:

“There it is—on that press. Give it to me. Oh, no. Don’t touch my bed. I’ve arranged some things there. You’ll disarrange everything.”

Françoise helped her put the spray of eglantine in her hair, with just an end falling over the neck. Then Thérèse

stood before the mirror a moment longer—satisfied. She was quite ready; she was drawing on her gloves.

“Ah, my dear,” cried Françoise, “there are no girls as white as you, even in the church!”

This compliment made her smile again. She took a last look in her mirror and turned toward the door.

“Come; let us go down. You can snuff the candles,” she said.

In the sudden darkness which followed Julien heard the door shut and Thérèse’s dress sweep along the corridor. He sat on the floor, next the bed, not yet daring to come out of the alcove. Dark night had thrown a veil before his eyes, but he could feel the presence of that bare foot. It seemed to chill the whole room. He had been there for a time, which he had failed to note, when the door opened again. By the little

swish of silk he knew it was Thérèse. She did not come in; she only stooped to set something down and murmured:

“Listen. You can’t have dined. You must eat something. Do you hear?”

The little swish was repeated as her dress trailed along the corridor again. Julien started and stood up. He was becoming stiff in the alcove; he could not remain crouched against that bed any longer beside Colombel. The clock struck eight. Four hours more. He began to walk softly.

A faint light, the glow of a starlit night, enabled him to make out the dark shapes of the furniture. Some of the corners were pitch black. But the mirror retained a reflection as of old silver. He was not naturally timorous; but in that room at times the sweat stood out on his forehead. All around him the black masses of the furniture seemed

to move, to take on menacing shapes. Three times he thought he heard distinctly sighs from the alcove. He stopped, rooted. When he listened intently he knew it was the sound of revelry below—dance-music and the ripple of laughter of the crowd. He closed his eyes; and, instead of the dark chamber, he saw a burst of light, a brilliant hall and Thérèse in her white dress swept by to a waltz-strain on the arm of a dancer. The *hôtel* was resounding with gay music. He was alone in this abominable corner, left to quake with terror. For a moment he staggered; his hair stood on end. He thought he saw a white light in one of the chairs. When he got courage to go near and touch it he found a white satin waist. He picked it up and buried his face in it.

Oh, what rapture! He wanted to for-

get everything. No. It was no longer a death watch; it was a vigil of love! He pressed his forehead against the window-pane, still holding the satin to his lips. And he told over the story of his heart. Across the way he saw his room; the windows were still open as he had left them. There it was that he had won Thérèse by his long evenings of music. The old flute sang his love, made his vows and its trembling voice was so sweet and timid that the girl was conquered, and had at last smiled upon him. This satin he was kissing was hers, a bit of remembrance she had left him to keep him from losing interest. His dream became so vivid that he left the window and ran to the door, thinking he heard her coming.

The chill of the room fell about his shoulders, and he was disillusioned. He remembered. Then a mad decision

seized him. He would not wait; he would come back this very night. She was too beautiful. He loved her too much. When a man loves guiltily he loves madly. Of course he would come back, and running so as not to lose a moment, when once he had dropped his load into the river. And like a madman, shaken by a spasm, he pressed the satin against his face to choke his passionate sobs.

Ten o'clock struck. He listened. It seemed to him years had passed. He waited stupidly. Finding bread and fruit under his hand, he ate ravenously, standing; he had a pain in his stomach which he could not appease. This would make him stronger doubtless. But when he had eaten he was overcome with a great weariness. It seemed the night would never be over. Downstairs the music sounded louder. Now and

then he felt the throb of the dancing in the floor. Carriages began to roll up the drive. He was watching the door closely when he saw the keyhole light up like a little star. He did not even conceal himself. If anyone came, so much the worse!

“No, thank you, Françoise,” Thérèse was saying as she appeared with a candle in her hand. “I can get along very well alone. Go to bed. You must be tired.”

She closed the door and locked it. Then she stood still for a moment, her finger on her lips, and holding the candlestick. Even the dance had not brought the least streak of color to her cheeks. She did not speak, but set down the candlestick and sat opposite Julien. For almost half-an-hour they waited, looking at each other.

The doors had been closed. The *hôtel*

was falling asleep. But what troubled Thérèse was the proximity of Françoise, who slept in the next room. They could hear her moving about for a while. Then her bed creaked; she had retired. For a long time she kept shifting about, as though unable to sleep, but at last the sound of strong and regular breathing came through the wall.

Thérèse was watching Julien gravely all the while. Now she said only one word:

“Come.”

They drew aside the curtains. They decided to clothe little Colombel fully. He was already as stiff as a puppet. When they had finished this loathsome task both their foreheads were wet with perspiration.

“Come,” she said a second time.

With one swing Julien lifted little Colombel. He carried him on his shoul-

ders as a butcher carries a carcass. He stooped his great height and the feet of the corpse were a yard from the floor.

“I’ll walk in front of you,” murmured Thérèse hastily. “I’ll lead you by your coat; you need only follow. And go gently.”

They had to pass through Françoise’s room first of all. It was a dreadful ordeal. They had almost got through when one leg of the corpse struck against a chair. Françoise awoke at the noise. They heard her raise her head, mumbling. And they stood still. Thérèse leaned against the door; he bent under the weight of the body, both fearful lest the mother might catch them carrying her son to the river. It was a moment of awful suspense. At last Françoise appeared to go to sleep again, and they moved on to the corridor cautiously.

But here another shock awaited them. The marquise had not yet retired, and a soft light filtered out at her door, which was partly open. They dared neither advance nor retreat. Julien felt that little Colombel was slipping from his shoulders, and would fall if they had to pass through Françoise's room again. For nearly a quarter-of-an-hour they did not move. And Thérèse had the awful courage to help hold up the body, so that Julien should not be worn out. Finally the thread of light disappeared; they could make the street. They were safe.

Thérèse opened the old deserted hall-door again, softly. And when Julien reached the middle of the square Quatre-Femmes with his burden and looked back, he saw her standing at the top of the stoop, bare armed and all white in her ball-dress. She was waiting for him.

V.

Julien was as strong as an ox. When he was very young he had amused himself in a neighboring forest helping the lumbermen, and he used to lift tree-trunks on his shoulders. So he carried Colombel like a feather; the little abortion was no heavier on his back than a bird now. He scarcely felt the weight, and he was seized with a wicked joy to find him so light, so delicate, so like nothing at all. Little Colombel would never grin again, passing under his window when he was playing his flute; would never tantalize him any more with his airs. And at the thought that he was carrying a successful rival thus, stiff and cold, Julien felt a shudder of satisfaction run down his back. He shifted the load higher on his neck

and gritted his teeth and hastened his pace.

The town was dark. But there was a light in one window on the square Quatre-Femmes, in Captain Pidoux's window. Doubtless the captain was indisposed. You could see the silhouette of his corpulence moving to and fro behind the curtains. Julien was uneasy and crept along close to the houses on the other side of the way. A sudden noise froze him. He stopped in a doorway. It was the notary Savournin's wife; she was getting a breath of air at her window, and looking up at the stars with long sighs. Ordinarily at this hour the square Quatre-Femmes was wrapped in deep slumber. Happily, Madame Savournin soon withdrew to the pillow of Maitre Savournin, whose snoring reached the street through the open window. And as soon as it was closed

Julien crossed the square rapidly, with the rotund profile of Captain Pidoux always before his eyes.

In the narrow street Beau-Soleil he felt easier. Here the houses were so close together and the pavement so winding that the starlight could not penetrate to the bottom of this cavern —simply a thread of shadow. As soon as he found himself thus sheltered he was carried away with an irresistible desire to run. It was dangerous and very stupid and he was keenly aware of the fact, but he could not stop galloping. He felt behind him the empty square Quatre-Femmes, with the windows of the notary's wife and the captain lighted up, like two large eyes watching him. His shoes clattered on the pavement so loud that he was sure he was being pursued. Then suddenly he halted. A few yards off he heard the

voices of the officers who boarded at the inn on Beau-Soleil, kept by an old woman with blonde hair. They must be celebrating the promotion of some comrade. Julien knew that if they came up the street he was lost. There was no side alley into which he might slip, and it was too late to escape by turning back. He heard the stamp of boots and the clatter of sabres. For a full moment he could not tell whether they were drawing nearer or going the other way. But by degrees the sound died out. He waited a little longer and then decided to push on. But this time he walked softly; he would have liked to be barefoot if he had dared take the time to pull off his shoes.

At last, Julien stole out through the city gate. There was neither watchtower nor any kind of sentinel. So he could pass freely. But the sudden con-

trast of the open country terrified him, upon coming out of the narrow street of Beau-Soleil. The landscape was all blue, a very faint blue. A soft wind was stirring, and it seemed to him that an immense crowd was waiting, and he felt their breath in his face. He imagined he was seen. A dreadful hue and cry went up and nailed him to the spot.

However, there was the bridge. He could make out the white road and the two parapets, low and grey, like stone benches. He heard the musical swish of the Chanteclair among the rushes. And then he risked it; he walked crouching and avoided the open, to elude the thousands of mute witnesses which he felt all around him. The spot he dreaded most of all was the bridge itself, on which he must be quite unsheltered, in view of the whole town,

built up like an amphitheatre. And he wanted to go to the other end of the bridge, to the very place where he always used to sit with his legs hanging over, to get the air on fine evenings. There was a spot in the Chanteclair, a great hole, placid and dark, hollowed out by little rapids and the deep action of a whirlpool. How often he had amused himself by dropping stones into this sheet of water to fathom its depth by the ripples! With a last effort of his will he crossed the bridge.

Yes, this was the spot. Julien recognized the slab of the railing, smoothed by long use. He leaned over and saw the eddy with its little smiling currents. He set his burden down on the parapet. Before throwing him over he had an irresistible longing to look at little Colombel once more. Every eye in the town upon him could not have deterred

him from this satisfaction. He looked the corpse in the face for several seconds. The hole in the temple had turned black. A wagon far off in the sleeping country sounded like long broken sobs. Then Julien hurried. To avoid a loud splash he would break the fall and let it down gently, so he took hold of the body and leaned over with it. But he did not know how the arms of the dead man would cling to his neck and pull him along. He saved himself miraculously by gripping a projection of the ledge. And so little Colombel wanted to take him along!

When he was once more sitting on the parapet he was overcome with weakness. He remained there, worn out, his back doubled up and his legs swinging, relaxed, like a man who had walked very far, just as he had sat there so often before. And he looked down into

the sleeping water, where the smiling dimples were beginning to reappear. One thing certain, little Colombel had wanted to take him along; he had caught him about the neck with his dead hands. But that was all over now. He took deep breaths of the fresh country air. He followed the silver course of the river between the velvet shadows of the trees. And this spot in nature seemed to him like a promise of peace, a ceaseless lullaby.

Then he recalled Thérèse. She was waiting for him. He could see her at this very moment, at the top of that ruined stoop, on the moss-grown door-step. How straight she stood in her white silk dress trimmed with eglantine —each with its little red heart! Perhaps she was getting chilled. Then she must have gone up to wait in her room,

and had left the door open and gone to bed.

Ah, what sweet thoughts! Never before had a woman waited for him. Another moment and he would be at the promised rendezvous. But his limbs were getting so heavy, he was afraid he was falling asleep. Was he a coward after all? And to arouse himself he pictured Thérèse in her room. As he had seen her, he saw her again—her arms raised and her neck bent, shaking out her soft tresses with those white hands. He urged himself with such recollections—the fragrance and softness of that dream-paradise, where he had drunk of madness. Was he going to let all this love, held out to him, with which his lips were already afire, slip by? He would crawl if his legs refused to carry him!

But the battle was already lost. His

love, overpowered, was in its death throes. There was only one thing he must have—sleep—sleep. The picture of Thérèse was fading; a black wall was shutting it out. To save his life he could not have lifted his finger as high as his shoulder. His dying passion savored somehow of a corpse. Oh, it was impossible; the ceiling would have fallen on their heads if he had gone back to that room and taken the girl to his bosom!

To sleep—just to sleep on forever! How good it would be when there wasn't anything to make waking worth while! He wouldn't go to the office to-morrow; what was the use? He wouldn't play his flute any more. He wouldn't sit at his window. Why not sleep forever? His life was full: he might as well lie down. And he looked into the river again to see if little Colombel was still

there. Colombel had been a clever boy; he knew what he was doing when he had tried to drag him along.

There was the water, rippled with the dancing laughter of its eddies. The Chanteclair was singing softly, while one large shadow spread over the landscape—sovereign peace. Julien murmured the name of Thérèse three times. Then he let himself fall, and turned like a bundle. There was a great splash and some spray. And the Chanteclair took up its song in the sedge.

When they found the two bodies everyone immediately thought of a struggle. They made up the whole story: Julien must have lain in wait for little Colombel to avenge himself for all the mocking; he must have struck him in the temple with a stone, and then thrown himself into the river.

Three months later Mademoiselle

Thérèse de Marsanne wedded the young Comte de Véteuil. She wore white, and her face was calm and full of lofty purity.

THE MAID OF THE DAWBER

The Maid of the Dawber

She is still in bed, half bare, smiling, her head turned away and her eyes full of sleep. One of her arms is lost in her hair, and the other hangs over the edge of the bed, the hand open. The count in slippers stands before one of the windows and runs up the shade. He is smoking a cigar with an air of absorption.

You all know her. She was twenty yesterday, and looks sixteen. She wears the most magnificent crown that heaven has ever bestowed upon one of its angels, a crown of brown gold, the royal crown of a deep blonde, soft and strong as a lion's mane, glossy as a skein of

silk. The wave of flame rolls about her neck. Each mesh has its little revolts, straightens itself and then runs out very long. The curls fall, the tresses glide and roll; the entire mass glows like a sunburst. And under the fire, in the midst of its splendor, appears the nape of a neck white and delicate, pale shoulders and full breasts. Irresistible seduction dwells on that fair throat, peeping out discreetly from the hair of insolent redness. Passion kindles and burns when your eyes lose themselves upon the neck of tender lights and golden shadows. Here are the tawny beast and the child, boldness and innocence, intoxication which draws terrible kisses.

Is she pretty? It is hard to say: her face is hidden by her hair. She must have a low forehead; eyes narrow and long, greyish. Her nose is doubtless ir-

regular, capricious; her mouth a little large, pale rose. What matter for the rest? You could not analyse her features or stop over the contour of her face. She confuses at first sight, as a strong wine does at the first glass. You see nothing but a whiteness in a red flame, a rosy smile; and her glance is like the flash of silver in the sunlight. She turns her head and you are too far gone already to study her perfections one by one. She is of medium stature—just a little slow and heavy in her movements. Her hands and feet are like a little girl's. Her whole body expresses indolent pleasure. One of her bare arms, full and dazzling, provokes a vertigo of desire. She is queen of May evenings, queen of loves that last for a night.

She leans on her left arm, slightly bent. She will soon rise. Meanwhile

she half opens her eyelids to get them accustomed to the daylight and the pale blue bed-curtains. She lies lost in the lace of her pillows. She seems ingulfed in the delicious moisture and fatigue of awakening. Her body is stretched out, white and motionless, gently stirring with a soft sigh. Rosy palenesses appear here and there, where the batiste stretches. Nothing could be richer than this bed and the woman lying upon it. The divine swan has a nest worthy of her.

The chamber is a marvel, a delicate blue, sweet and reserved. The colors and the perfume are refreshing. The air is languishing, thrilling and cool. The curtains hang in large, lazy folds. The carpet lies deaf and mute. The silence of this temple, the softness of the lights, the prudence of the shadows, the purity of the furnishings remind

one of a goddess, who unites all the graces with all the elegancies. Surely she was reared in milk baths. Her delicate limbs bespeak the noble indolence of her life. It is amusing to fancy that her soul is just as white as her body.

The count is finishing his cigar, keenly interested in a horse which has just fallen in the Champs, and which they are trying to get upon his feet. The poor beast has fallen on his left flank, and the shaft must be breaking his ribs.

II.

At the back of the chamber, on her perfumed bed, the wonderful creature is awaking, little by little. Now she has opened her eyes wide, but remains motionless. The mind is awake, the flesh asleep. She is dreaming. To what luminous sphere has she been soaring? What legions of angels are passing before her and bring a smile to her lips? What project, what pretty task is she meditating? What first thought, dawn of her awakening, has just surprised her? Her wide-open eyes are fixed on the curtain. She has not yet stirred. She is lost in her dreams, and only her eyelids blink at intervals. She is long caressing her thoughts.

Then briskly, as though obeying a sharp call, she stretches forth her

feet and springs lightly to the carpet. The statue has come to life. She tosses back from her forehead the hair, which winds flaming about her shoulders of snow. She gathers up her laces, slips into her blue velvet mules, crosses her arms in a charming pose; and then, half-stooping, her shoulders arched, pouting like a mischievous child, she trots off rapidly, noiselessly, and lifting a portière, disappears.

The count throws away his cigar with a sigh of satisfaction. The horse in the street is up. A lash of a whip brought the poor animal to its feet. The count turns and sees the empty bed. He looks at it a moment; then advances leisurely, and sitting on the edge, begins in his turn to study the pale blue curtain.

A woman's face is brazen: a man's is like a clear spring which reveals all the

secrets of its limpidity. The count is studying the curtain, and figures mechanically how much it should have cost a yard. He adds and multiplies, for mere distraction, and concludes with a large figure. Then involuntarily, carried away by the relation of ideas, he sets a valuation on the whole bedchamber, and arrives at an enormous total.

His hand rests on the bed, below the pillow. The spot is warm. The count forgets the temple to think of the idol. He studies the bed, that voluptuous disorder which every fair sleeper leaves behind her; and at the sight of a golden hair, glistening on the whiteness of the pillow, he loses himself in thought of this woman. Then two ideas unite: he thinks of the woman and of the chamber at the same time. He amuses himself with a long comparison of the woman and the furniture, the draperies and the

carpet. Everything is harmonious. Here the count's reverie strays, and by one of those inexplicable mysteries of human thought his boots claim his attention. Suggested by nothing, they suddenly take possession of his whole mind. He recalls that for about three months every morning when he has left this room he has found his boots blacked and polished. He wonders in this recollection.

The chamber is splendid. The woman simply divine. The count is staring again at the sky-blue curtains and the single golden hair on the linen. He compliments himself, declaring that he righted an error of Providence when he installed in satin this queen of grace, whom chance bore to a sewer-cleaner and a porteress at the foot of a dark alley, near Fontainebleau. He praises himself for having given a soft nest

to this marvel for the mere sum of five or six thousand francs. He rises and walks a few paces. He is lonesome. He recalls that for three months he has been left alone thus every morning for a full quarter of an hour. And then, without curiosity, just for the sake of doing something, he lifts the portières and disappears in his turn.

III.

The count passes through a long suite of rooms, where he finds nobody. But returning, he hears in a closet a violent and continued sound of brushing. Thinking that it is a servant, and wishing to question her as to her mistress' absence, he opens the door and looks in. And he stops on the threshold, gaping, stupefied.

The closet is small, painted yellow, with a brown base the height of a man. In one corner there is a pail and a large sponge, in another a broom and a feather-duster. A bay-window throws a stiff light on the bareness of this store-room, very high and very narrow. The air is damp and fresh.

In the centre, on a straw mat, sits the beauty with golden hair, her feet gath-

ered up under her. On her right is a pot of boot-blacking, with a brush and a dawber caked from use, still thick and damp. On her left is a boot, shining like a mirror, masterpiece of the boot-blacker's art. About her are spattered spots of dirt and a fine gray dust. A little further off lies the knife to scrape the soles. She is holding on her hand the other boot. One of her arms is quite lost in the leather upper. Her little fingers clutch an enormous brush with long, stiff bristles, and she is scrubbing furiously at the heel, which seems to refuse to take a shine.

She has swathed her laces about her bare knees, which she holds apart. Drops of sweat roll down her cheeks and her shoulders; and now and then she must stop to toss back impatiently her tresses, which fall over her eyes. Her bosoms and her arms of alabaster are

covered with spots, some tiny as pin-heads, some as large as beans: the blacking, as it flies from the bristles, has flecked that dazzling whiteness with black stars. She compresses her lips and eyes, wet and smiling. She bends lovingly over the boot, appearing rather to caress than to rub it. She is devoted to her task and forgets herself in her infinite pleasure, shaken by her rapid movements. The bay-window pours on her its cold light. A wide ray falls across her, kindling her tresses, enhancing the rosy tint of her skin and turning her laces blue; it displays this marvel of grace and delicacy in the dirt.

Here she is, greedy and happy. She is the daughter of her father, the daughter of her mother. Every morning, upon awakening, she thinks of her childhood passed on the filthy staircase, in the midst of the old shoes of all the

lodgers. She thinks; and a wild desire possesses her to scrape something, even if it is only a pair of boots. She has a passion for the dawber, as other people have a passion for flowers. This is her secret, the thing of which she is ashamed, but in which she finds strange delights. And so, she rises and goes every morning in her luxury, in her immaculate beauty, to scrape the soles with the tips of her white fingers, and to wallow her delicacy of a great lady in the unsavory task of a bootblack.

The count touches her lightly on the shoulder; and when she raises her head in surprise he takes his boots from her, puts them on, tosses her twenty-five sous, and quietly withdraws.

IV.

Later in the day the maid of the dawber is vexed and harrowed and outraged. She writes to the count. She claims damages of a hundred thousand francs. The count replies that he does recall owing her something. Polishing his boots at twenty-five sous a day makes twenty-three francs at the end of three months. He is sending her twenty-three francs by his man.

COMPLEMENTS



COMPLEMENTS

In Paris they have everything for sale—silly girls and wise, lies and truth, tears and smiles. You surely know that in this land of business beauty is a commodity in which they deal on a tremendous scale. They buy and sell large eyes and small mouths; noses and chins are valued down to a fine point. This dimple or that mole represents a certain price. And since imitation is always going on, they often counterfeit God's merchandise; artificial eyebrows traced with burnt matches or false switches stuck on with long hairpins are more highly prized than the genuine article.

All of which is perfectly reasonable.

We are a civilized people, and of what use is civilization if it doesn't help us to deceive and to be deceived in order to make life more worth the living?

But I was really surprised when I learned yesterday that a business man, old Durandeau, whom you know as well as I do, had hit upon the ingenious and astounding inspiration of dealing in ugliness. That they should sell beauty is perfectly comprehensible; that they should sell false beauty is quite natural, —it is a sign of progress. But beyond the shadow of a doubt Durandeau has earned the gratitude of all France by putting on the market that commodity, deadwood until now, called ugliness. Understand me, I am speaking of ugliness that is ugly—frank ugliness, honestly sold as ugliness.

You have surely often met women traveling in pairs on the principal ave-

nues. They walk slowly, stopping at the shop-windows with stifled laughter and carrying their clothes gracefully. They lock arms like two old friends with an air of intimacy; almost of the same age, costumed with equal elegance. But you will always find one of them fairly good-looking—one of those faces which call for no especial remark. You wouldn't think of turning around to get a better view, but if by chance you should notice her you could look without displeasure. The other is always atrociously ugly—irritatingly so, an ugliness which catches the eye, which compels passersby to make comparisons between her and her companion. Confess that you have been ensnared, and that sometimes you have started to follow the two women. The monster alone on the avenue would have frightened you. The fairly good-looking young woman would have left

you quite indifferent. But they were together, and the ugliness of the one heightened the beauty of the other.

Well, I can tell you: the monster, the atrociously ugly woman, belongs to Durandeau's Agency. She is one of his "Complements." The great Durandeau has let her to the insignificant face at five francs an hour.

II.

Here is the story. Durandea is a business man of originality and invention, a millionaire who can afford to be something of an artist in trade. For many years he bewailed the fact that one had never been able to make a cent out of ugly girls. As for speculating in the pretty ones, it is a delicate business, and Durandea, who has all the scruples of a rich man, would never think of it. One day he was suddenly inspired. He conceived his original idea in a twinkling, just as all great inventors do. He was walking on the Avenue when he saw in front of him two girls, one pretty and the other ugly. And as he looked he understood that the ugly one was an adjustment which complemented the pretty one. Just as ribbons,

rice powder and false tresses are to be had for sale, so it was right and proper, he reasoned, that beauty should be able to purchase ugliness like an ornament which should be becoming.

Durandea^u went home to reflect at leisure. The venture which he was meditating must be conducted with the greatest tact. He did not wish to jump pell-mell into an enterprise which would prove a bonanza if it succeeded, but ridiculous if it miscarried. He passed the night in calculations and reading the philosophers who have said the cleverest things about man's folly and woman's vanity. Next morning, at dawn, he had come to a decision. Calculation had borne him out: the philosophers had said so much about the vileness of humanity that he counted upon a large patronage.

III.

Would I had the inspiration ; I would write the epic of the foundation of Durandeau's Agency. It would be an epic farcical and sad, full of tears and bursts of laughter.

Durandeau had more trouble than he anticipated in laying in a stock of wares. Wishing to act directly, he contented himself at first with posting on pipes and on the trees in by-places little placards which bore the following legend, written by hand: "Wanted—Ugly girls to do easy work." He waited eight days, and not a single ugly girl applied. Five or six pretty ones came and begged for work, sobbing. They were just hovering between hunger and vice, and still hoped to save themselves by work. Durandeau, much

embarrassed, told them over and over again that they were pretty and wouldn't do. But they insisted that they were ugly, that it was pure gallantry and quite wrong on his part if he called them pretty. And now, being unable to sell the ugliness which they had not, they are selling the good-looks which they have.

Durandeau, in the face of this result, understood that only pretty girls have the courage of owning to imaginary ugliness. As for the really ugly ones, they would never come of their own will and admit the unmeasurable size of their mouths nor the extraordinary smallness of their eyes. Advertise by hand-bills that you will give ten francs to every ugly girl who will present herself, and you will not be impoverished.

Durandeau gave up advertising. He hired half-a-dozen emissaries and

turned them loose on the city in quest of monstrosities. There was a general recruiting of the ugliness of Paris. The emissaries, men of tact and taste, had ticklish business. Their methods depended upon the character and position of those they approached; brusque when the subject was in dire need of money, more gentle when they were dealing with some girl not yet on the brink of starvation. It is impossible for a polite man to say to a woman: "Madam, you are ugly. I will pay you for your ugliness so much a day."

Some memorable episodes occurred in this hunt for the poor girls who weep before their mirrors. Sometimes the emissaries were hot upon the scent. They had seen in the street a woman of ideal ugliness, and they did their best to bring her before Durandeau, to earn

the thanks of the master. Some of them had recourse to extreme methods.

Every morning Durandea*u* received and inspected the stock gathered the day before. Comfortably ensconced in an armchair, in yellow housecoat and black satin cap, he had the new recruits file past him, each with the emissary who had captured her. Then he would turn away, blink his eyes, and look like a fancier—displeased or satisfied. He would pause and hesitate; then to get a better view he would have the goods turned around and would examine them on all sides. Sometimes he would even rise, touch their hair and examine their faces, as a merchant feels of a woolen or as a grocer satisfies himself about candles or pepper. When the ugliness was unquestionable, when the expression was stupid and dull, Durandea*u* would rub his hands gleefully and con-

gratulate the emissary; he would even have embraced the monster. But he was chary of new kinds of ugliness. When the eyes glistened and the lips had sharp smiles, he frowned and mumbled to himself that such a type of ugliness, if it was not exactly fit for love, might do for passion. He showed marked coldness to the emissary, and told the woman to come back again, later on, when she was older.

It is not as easy as one might think to be an expert on ugliness, to make a collection of women truly ugly, quite harmless to pretty girls. Durandeau proved his genius in the selections he made, for he showed how deep a knowledge he had of the heart and of the emotions. The great criterion for him, of course, was the face, and he accepted only discouraging faces—those which froze by their grossness and stupidity.

The day on which the agency was finally opened, when it placed at the disposal of pretty women ugly ones suited to their complexions and their particular styles of beauty, he issued the following prospectus:

IV.

Paris, 1st May, 18—

AGENCY FOR COMPLEMENTS,

L. DURANDEAU,

18 Rue M—, Paris.

Office Hours:

10 to 4.

MADAM:—

I have the honor of advising you that I have just established this house, which must be of the greatest service for the maintenance of woman's beauty. I am the inventor of an article which will set off with a new glory nature's graces.

Heredofore adornment has been patent. Laces and jewels are obvious.

You can easily detect a false switch in the coiffure, and whether the purple of the lips and the delicate pink of the cheeks are tinted.

Now, I have set myself to the solution of this problem—impossible at first blush—to beautify women, leaving everyone to guess whence comes the added touch. Without an extra ribbon, without touching the skin, my purpose has been to find for them an infallible means of attracting all eyes, and yet not overdoing nature's tender grace.

I believe I may flatter myself that I have completely solved the apparently insoluble problem to which I addressed myself.

And to-day every lady who will honor me with her confidence can secure, at a low figure, the admiration of all eyes.

My device is extremely simple and reliable. I need only describe it,

Madam, and you will understand at once exactly how it acts.

Have you ever noticed a poor woman in close proximity with a beauty in silks and laces, who is giving her alms from her gloved hand? Did you mark how the silk shone in contrast with the tatters; how well all that richness was set off and how it gained from contrast with the misery?

Madam, I have to offer to handsome faces the most complete line of ugly ones that can be found anywhere. Seedy garments set off new. My ugly faces set off pretty ones.

No more false teeth; no more false switches; no more false necks! No more make-up, costly costumes, enormous expenditures for colors and laces!—Only “Complements,” which one takes by the arm and leads along

the Avenue, to set off one's beauty, and win the tender glances of the gentlemen.

Your patronage is respectfully solicited, Madam. You will find here the ugliest and most varied assortment. You are at liberty to select and suit your beauty with the type of ugliness which best becomes it.

Rates: 5 francs an hour; 50 francs a day.

I am, Madam, most respectfully,

DURANDEAU.

N. B.—The Agency supplies likewise well-trained mothers, fathers, uncles and aunts. Charges moderate.

V.

The success was great. Next day the Agency opened for business. The office was crowded with customers, each of whom chose her "Complement," and marched her off in a sort of ferocious joy. Can you imagine what a pleasure it is for a handsome woman to lean on the arm of an ugly one? She enhances her own beauty, and thoroughly enjoys the ugliness of the other. Durandeau was a great philosopher.

It must not be supposed, however, that the working of the Agency was perfectly easy. A thousand unforeseen obstacles arose. The difficulty of acquiring a stock in trade was nothing beside that of satisfying customers.

A lady would come in and ask for a "Complement." They showed the stock and bade her choose, presuming only

to give a hint of advice now and then. Thereupon, the lady would flit from one “Complement” to another, disdainful, finding the poor girls too ugly or not ugly enough, complaining that not one of the uglinesses suited her own style of beauty. The clerks pointed out to her the crooked nose of this one, the receding forehead of another; they were put to their wits’ end.

At other times the lady herself was frightfully ugly—so much so that Durandeau, had he been there, would have been possessed of a mad desire to procure her at any price. She came to have her beauty heightened, she would say; she wanted a young “Complement”—not too ugly, since she needed only a slight adornment. The clerks, in despair, stationed her before a large mirror and paraded behind her the entire stock. But she herself would have

taken the prize. Then she would sweep out, indignant that they had the presumption to offer her such looking objects.

Little by little, however, the patronage settled down. Each "Complement" had her regular customers. Durandeau could rest assured in his heart of having helped humanity take a great step in advance.

I doubt whether the position of the "Complement" is thoroughly appreciated. It has its joys, which are shown to the world; but it has also its tears, which are hidden. The "Complement" is ugly. She is a slave; she draws her salary for being a slave and for being ugly. As for the rest, she is well-dressed, she shakes hands with celebrities, she lives in carriages, she luncheons and dines at the famous restaurants, she passes her evenings at the theatre.

She is apparently on terms of intimacy with famous beauties; and the uninitiated think her of the inner circle at the races and at first nights. All day she is in a whirl of gaiety. At night she eats her heart out, in tears. She has taken off her finery, which belongs to the Agency; she is alone in her attic room, before her little mirror, which tells the truth. She is face to face with all her ugliness, and she realizes that she will never be loved. She whose business it is to kindle emotion for others will never taste a kiss herself.

VI.

My present purpose has been only to outline the establishment of the Agency, and to transmit the name of Durandeau to posterity. Such men have their positions well defined in history. Some day perhaps I will write the “Confessions of a Complement.” I knew one of the unfortunates, and her sufferings touched me to the quick. She used to enjoy the patronage of some women whom all Paris knows; and they were pretty hard on her. Have pity, my ladies! Do not tear the laces which bedeck you: be gentle to the ugly, without whom you would not be so engaging.

My “Complement” was a spirited creature, who, I imagine, had read a great deal of Walter Scott. I can think of nothing sadder than a cripple in love or an ugly woman yearning for the

ideal. The poor girl fell in love with all the men whose eyes her dreadful face deflected to her patronesses. She has lived many a little drama. She was frightfully jealous of those women who paid for the use of her, as one pays for a pot of pomade or a pair of boots. She was a thing let for so much an hour, and it always turned out a good bargain. Can you imagine her bitterness, all the while she was smiling and prattling with those women who were stealing the love that should have been hers? And those very pretty women who took a spiteful delight in cajoling her intimately before the world treated her like a servant when alone; they would have liked to crush her for fun, as they might break the ornaments on their *étagères*.

But of what account is a suffering soul to the progress of the world? Hu-

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